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## 学 位 论 文

Toward a New Utopia: A Study of the Novels

by Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Cynthia Ozick

追寻一个新的理想国:

索尔·贝娄、伯纳德·马拉默德与辛西娅·奥芝克小说研究

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## Abstract

Jewish-American literature is an inalienable and important part of American literature. Jewish-American writers, especially those who publish after the 1950s, dazzle readers and critics with their amazing achievement and become one of the focuses of interest and attention. They carry off important national and international prizes. What's more important, they write not exclusively for a certain ethnic group, but for all of humanity in modern life. They depict the suffering, marginality, victimization, alienation, and redemption of common man under modern conditions.

Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Cynthia Ozick are among those who are most noteworthy. Through a description of the experiences of the second generation American Jews to which they belong and through a discussion of their novels, the purpose of this dissertation is to find out how they resort to the essence of both the Jewish and American dominant cultures in order to search for a new utopia as a remedy to the problems of the American society.

By the 1950s and 1960s, the assimilation process had made great changes to the mind and concerns of the second generation American Jews, especially the writers as artists. In cultural assimilation, American Jews had sufficiently absorbed American dominant values and democratic principles and their adherence to Judaism, Jewish cultural values and behavioral patterns had decreased to the so-called "symbolic Judaism". In structural assimilation, so many years of efforts had led most American Jews to a middle-class status as the professionals and they were socially, economically and politically comfortable compared with the previous generation. As a result, changes occurred to their attitudes to the identity issue. As far as the educated and middle-class American Jews are concerned, they believe themselves to be first of all Americans, and then Jewish, and so their Jewishness has decreased to the comfortable minimum. Since they are not totally exempt from family and educational influences from the Jewish culture and tradition, surely they are concerned with affairs associated with Jews, but they are more concerned with American issues. This is the case especially with the Jewish-American writers. They touch on typically Jewish questions, such as Jewish assimilation, identity problems, and marginality, but such themes are endowed with more universalistic values than ethnic importance.

As they are Americans with a sense of Jewishness, Bellow, Malamud and Ozick devote their attention in their novels to the problems in the general American society, but their Jewish influence offers them archetypal perspectives in explaining people's sufferings in modern American society. Although suffering is common to all peoples alike, the long history of suffering in exile and Diaspora in Jewish culture makes it possible that the ideas of suffering as expressed by Bellow, Malamud and Ozick can be comprehensive enough to speak for all humanity.

First of all, they disclose that people suffer from the disillusionment of the United States as the model of democracy, which is part of the American Dream. They are aware that cultural assimilation does not guarantee the disappearance of anti-Semitism. However, anti-Semitism is regarded as one instance of the many

inequalities that the American society still has to deal with. Malamud's *The Fixer*, published in the period of the 1960s civil rights movement, connects the suffering of Yakov not only with the fate of the Jewish people but also with that of other oppressed minorities in America, expressing the sentiment that the inequities are betrayal of American democratic principles and values. Bellow, Malamud and Ozick also disclose that the whole society has grown more and more into one of the domination of the rich few while the majority is controlled by the machine of the society with the individuals belittled and the individual life devalued, which is best reflected in Bellow's novel *Herzog*. In addition, success, also the core of the American dream, gradually comes to be connected solely with the worldly aspects of money, fame and power. Through Wilhelm in *Seize the Day*, Bellow reveals that the society is characterized by materialism, selfishness, emptiness, and suffering, and lack spiritual concern.

Bellow, Malamud and Ozick also deal with the issue of suffering from a Jewish traditional perspective. One explanation is that suffering is something natural and yet inexplicable to human life, and that human beings suffer because they are within certain divine design beyond human understanding, as is embodied in the biblical figure of Job, and reflected in the fate of Leventhal in Bellow's *The Victim*. The second explanation is that suffering is experienced as one suffering for all other people or peoples. This is the idea embodied in Yakov of *The Fixer* and in Morris of *The Assistant*. The third explanation is that suffering is the punishment from God because people have lost their faith and don't believe in God, but worship idols instead. Bellow associates idolatry with worship of the material and fame through Wilhelm and Citrine in *Humboldt's Gift*. Ozick equates idolatry with worship of fame in "Usurpation (Other People's Stories)", worship of Eros and money in *Trust*, and worship of the assimilated life in "Rosa", and warns of the danger of idolatry.

Besides, Bellow, Malamud and Ozick also believe that suffering results from human evils, created by the destructive aspects of human desires—the expanding desires for power and fame, and sensuous desires for material enjoyment, and sex. In *God's Grace*, Malamud even imagines a day when human evil is so great that the whole human world is finally destroyed.

In dealing with the various forces that cause human sufferings, there is the quest underlying the novels by Bellow, Malamud and Ozick for a utopian society, a quest that is derived from a combination of classical utopianism as put forward by Plato, Augustine and Thomas More and modern political philosophy. The concept of utopia in the philosophical tradition usually refers to an ideal commonwealth or state, a place of order, perfect in social, political, and moral aspects. Traditional utopianism emphasizes the discipline and control of the individual, which leaves people no freedom of choice while modern political philosophers such as Locke, Rousseau and Paine emphasize the building of efficient governmental system and institutions.

Bellow, Malamud and Ozick first explore the feasibility of building a utopia in the traditional sense. Bellow explores it from the political-intellectual perspective through *The Adventures of Augie March* and alludes to the fact that the hopes that American intellectuals put on the Soviet Union model during the 1930s and 1940s

failed the intellectual expectations. He also proves in *To Jerusalem and Back* that the nation-state of Israel is a territorial home for the world Jewry to find security in rather than an ideal land. In addition, Ozick makes Puttermesser try to build a utopia through civic uprightness in *The Puttermesser Papers*, and Malamud has Cohn building an ordered world that is based on reason and intellect and exempt from all evils of the modern world in *God's Grace*. But both utopias end in failure because of the destructive forces of unbridled human desires. In fact, as Ozick demonstrates, the bliss of the Paradise can only be imagined in the afterlife where desires are moderate, satiable and well balanced with intellect and reason and where there are no passions and appetites that tempt man to evil-doing.

However, to build a utopia in this world on the American land is more important. Bellow, Malamud and Ozick show a great concern about how to build an efficient democratic governmental system according to the Enlightenment ideals, but importance is attached to the humanistic concern of improving man, as in classical utopianism. For Bellow, Malamud and Ozick, the American capitalist democratic system, which is developed according to the great Enlightenment ideals, could theoretically be so far the best and most beneficial governing system but for the corruption of man that creates so much evil and human suffering. Therefore, the focus is to solve the problem from the perspective of man. But compared with traditional utopianism, they are concerned with improving the society under the pretext of giving man more freedom of choice and the new utopianism is not a fixed state of perfection, but rather a striving and process for a better and better future through unceasing improvement of both the individual and the society.

In their quest to establish a utopian state of existence from a humanistic perspective, Bellow, Malamud and Ozick fall back on both the Jewish and American dominant cultures because of their indebtedness to both cultures.

On the one hand, they believe in the Jewish idea that human suffering has redemptive and educative power, which will improve man's moral character to promote the society toward perfection. First, people should and can learn from suffering to accept the idea of suffering for other people or to initiate an action to counter evil and other destructive forces, as Malamud demonstrates in *The Assistant* and *The Fixer*. Second, community has an important position in the new utopia. The experiences of human evil and suffering can teach people to devote themselves to the community, so that the expanding human desires will be tempered and modified, and communal efforts will eventually lead to a diminution of prevalent evil and suffering. Bellow points out through Herzog's experiences that one should return from the big quest for a unique destiny to ordinary life. In "Rosa", Ozick also emphasizes the importance of a return to the community as a real victory over the evil as embodied in the Holocaust. And it is unanimously agreed that healthy human relationship is important to a utopian society. In "Angel Levine" and *The Tenant*, Malamud expresses the idea that healthy human relationship means love and mutual help not only among the individuals, but also among different ethnic groups. Furthermore, Malamud points out in *The Assistant* and *A New Life* that to be involved in the community also means to learn to assume responsibility and to lead a life of moral

entanglement. Third, Bellow, Malamud and Ozick explore a renewed concept of God and illustrate that people can confront evil and suffering and improve themselves by grasping and following the new concept of God. In modern conditions, the idea of God is valid more in cultural sense than in religious sense and Godhood is associated more with the moral forces of human life, and with the ordering of the social forces that govern human relationships. Altogether, five aspects to the renewed concept of God can be concluded from the novels by Bellow, Malamud and Ozick.

On the other hand, the new utopia is also based on the essence of the American Dream, which is a substantial part of the American dominant culture. The American Dream refers to the American creed and liberal ideals based on the American land—the land of immigrants. It not only includes such ideals as freedom, equality, and protection of human rights of life, and happiness, but also means success—winning material rewards or doing one's job well and winning recognition of some sort through individual efforts and strives. It is hoped that the American Dream can be realized in the sense of the immigrants' dream through two aspects.

First, The progress of the society towards a better form lies fundamentally in the function of an enlightened government, so it is important to choose the wise leaders that can guide, work for and serve the people. They also believe that legal system could be efficient in preventing the authority from abusing its power and to protect human rights if it were not turned sour by bloodthirsty lawyers. In the matter of an inefficient government or authority, it is in line with democratic spirits to disobey, and even to rebel. But Bellow, Malamud and Ozick put more trust in reforming and in the gradual progress of the society, so it is necessary that the man in power should be educated and trained to rule with virtue. Malamud expresses these ideas comprehensively in *A New Life*. Furthermore, the rights to equality, liberty and individual pursuit of happiness would be an empty talk if they are not extended to not only the minority groups, but also to women. But gender discrimination is reflected even in the novels of great male writers, including Bellow and Malamud. Ozick contributes to the literary world with her women characters with their good and flaws, their experiences and emotions, thus giving light to what the new Utopia should be like as far as woman is concerned.

Second, Bellow, Malamud and Ozick demonstrate that, although beneficial for the development and vitality of both the man and the society, achieving success through individual strive goes to the extreme and lead to obsession with achieving worldly success of the material and fame, which has caused evil and suffering. To reduce those negative effects, they believe in the function of art in building man's imagination, which can incite man's mind, make man engaged more in spiritual than in material life, and restore man's soul to life.

Jewish essence is in no contradiction with the essence of the American Dream. What these writers cherish and rely on in the Jewish tradition is the part that is universalistic rather than parochial, derived partly from the Western Enlightenment tradition, corresponding to humanism in the American democratic principles and values, which are also derived from the Western humanistic tradition.

Utopianism is always associated with impracticality, and the new version of Utopia in these artists' perspective is no exception. Above all, there is a dilemma concerning the attitudes of Bellow, Malamud and Ozick toward democratic principles. They are fully aware of the illusion of the dream of real democracy in modern conditions, but since they are influenced by bourgeois education, they still cherish the belief that the institutions and systems could realize justice, equality and liberty but for the corruption of those in power. Second, they believe in education and a gradual reform in man's moral character instead of a change of the society, the government, institutions, or the system. But education and cultivation must be a long process and the very idea rather feeble when it comes to cruel and atrocious reality. Furthermore, it should be noted that there is no constructive relationship between man and woman in the utopian ideals of either the male or the female writers in question.

Despite the limitations in the new utopianism in their novels, there is still importance in their quest in the postmodernist aura the world over. While postmodernism doubts universal values and the "metanarratives" of freedom and equality, Bellow, Malamud and Ozick acknowledge that there is a gap between universal values and the reality, but believe that the gap can be bridged with man's efforts. The reality can betray the universal ideals, but it does not mean that universal ideals do not exist for all humanity. The meaning of the new Utopia lies in its hope and faith that the world can be gradually and yet fundamentally improved and is developing toward perfection.

A study of the novels by Bellow, Malamud and Ozick shows that there are valuable treasures in different cultures on the one hand and there are fundamental values that are common to all cultures on the other hand. The quest of a new utopia that they express through their novels reflects the wish of not only the Jewish American readers, but other readers as well. Although it is a long way in developing the new utopian society, the idea of the new utopia underlying their novels still appeals to different readers with its thought-provoking implication.

**Key Words:**

Jewish-American literature, assimilation, suffering, quest, utopia, Jewish culture, the American Dream



## 摘要

美国犹太文学是美国文学一个不可缺少的重要部分。美国犹太作家，尤其是在 20 世纪 50 年代以后发表小说的美国犹太作家，他们的成就令人瞩目，成为读者和文学批评者关注的一个焦点。他们相继获得重要的全国乃至国际大奖。更重要的是，他们不仅仅是为某个民族的人民写作，而是为所有现代人写作。他们描述了现代状况下普通人的受难、边缘状态、受害、异化和救赎。

索尔·贝娄、伯纳德·马拉默德和辛西娅·奥芝克是最值得瞩目的美国犹太作家。本论文旨在通过研究他们所属的第二代美国犹太移民的经历和他们的小说，揭示他们如何吸取犹太文化和美国主流文化的精髓，追寻一个新的理想国，以整治美国社会的困境。

在 20 世纪 50 和 60 年代，第二代美国犹太移民的同化进程已经大大地改变了他们的思想和关注的焦点，尤其是作为艺术家的美国犹太小说家。在文化同化方面，美国移民已经吸取了大量的美国主流文化价值观和民主准则，他们的犹太教信仰、犹太文化价值观和行为规范已经降低至所谓的“象征性犹太教”。在社会结构同化方面，多年的努力已经使多数美国犹太人上升到中层阶级的地位，他们在政治、经济和社会等方面都比上一代有了很大的提高。因此，他们在针对属性问题的态度上也有了重大变化。至少就受过教育的中层美国犹太人来说，他们认为首先自己是美国人，然后才是具有犹太性。他们的犹太性已经减弱至最低限度。但由于他们不能完全摆脱犹太文化传统的影响，他们关注着与犹太人有关的问题，不过，作为美国公民，他们更关注的是美国社会问题。这对于美国犹太作家来说，尤为如此。他们会表现一些与犹太人有关的主题，如同化、身份、边缘性等，但这些主题常具有普遍价值，而不仅仅是涉及他们所属的种族。

由于贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克是具有犹太性的美国人，他们的小说关注着整个美国社会，但他们在诠释美国现代社会的受难问题时，他们所受到的犹太文化影响从原型的角度为他们提供了启发。无论什么民族都有受难经历，但犹太文化中，受难的异族人这一漫长的历史使他们对受难的解释足以涵盖整个人类的受难。

首先，他们提出，人们的痛苦来自美国作为民主典范这一美国梦的虚幻性。他们认识到，文化的同化并不能保证反犹主义就能消失。但是，反犹主义只是美国社会诸多不平等现象中的一例。马拉默德的《基辅怨》发表于 20 世纪 60 年代，正是民权运动如火如荼的时候。书中将主人公雅克夫的受难不仅与犹太人民的命运联系起来，而且与其他受压迫的少数民族联系起来，揭示了美国社会的种种不平等现象是对美国民主准则和价值观的背叛。三位美国犹太作家同时还展示，整个美国社会越来越控制在有钱的少数人手里，多数人和社会机器所控制，个人被忽视，生命遭到贬值。贝娄的《赫索格》充分地表现了这一主题。此外，美国梦的另一个核心——成功——也越来越变成对金钱、名利的疯狂追逐。贝娄在《只争朝夕》中，通过威尔姆这一形象，揭示出整个社会充满了拜金主义、利己主义、空虚和痛苦，缺乏精神追求。

贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克又从犹太传统的角度阐释受难问题。一种解释是，痛苦是与生俱来，不可理解，人类受难，是因为人类处于不可理喻的神圣结构当中，这在《圣经》人物约伯身上得到体现，又在贝娄的《受害者》里拉文莎尔的命运中再现。第二种解释是，受难应理解为代人受过。这种解释就体现在马拉默

德小说《基辅怨》的雅克夫和《店员》的莫里斯身上。第三种解释是，受难是上帝对人类不信神却去崇拜偶像的惩罚。贝娄在《只争朝夕》和《洪堡的礼物》中，将偶像崇拜与名利崇拜联系在一起，奥芝克则在《篡夺（他人的故事）》中将之与名望崇拜等同，在《信任》中将之与沉迷于肉欲与金钱等同，在《罗莎》中将之与对同化生活的崇拜等同，同时她还对此提出了警告：追求感官物质享受、名利和权力正是美国犹太人同化进程中的负面影响，如果不消除这些负面影响的话，势必毁灭这些偶像崇拜者。

此外，三位美国犹太作家也相信，痛苦来源于人类的邪恶，而邪恶又源于毁灭性的人类欲望，如自我的无限膨胀和权力熏心、对感官物质享受和名利的欲望等。马拉默德在《上帝的恩惠》中甚至想象到，终有一天人类的邪恶会摧毁整个人类社会。

贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克在小说中分析产生痛苦的种种力量时，展现了一种对理想社会的追寻，这种追寻，与柏拉图、奥古斯丁和托马斯·莫尔等的古典乌托邦思想和现代政治哲学有着莫大的渊源，但又有着许多区别。这种哲学意义上的乌托邦，通常是指一个理想的国度，一个井然有序的地方，在社会、政治和道德等方面都达到完美状态。它包括国家或政府以及人民两个方面。古典乌托邦思想比较注重对人的控制和约束，它往往制定种种规范，要求人们严格遵循这些规范。后来的现代政治哲学中，哲学家如洛克、孟德斯鸠、卢梭和托马斯·佩恩等则对政府体系、机构、和制度等提出了设想。然而，古典乌托邦中，由于人们受到严格约束，人们没有自由选择，缺乏个性，因此期望通过制定规范和强制人们遵循规范来达到社会的完美状态，这是可欲而不可求的。

贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克在他们的小说都探讨了建立传统的理想国的可能性。贝娄在《奥吉·马奇历险记》中探讨了政治知识分子的理想，暗示了 20 世纪 30 和 40 年代美国知识分子对苏联的政治模式所寄予的希望最终以失望告终。贝娄又在《耶路撒冷往返记》中证明，以色列这一民族国家只是所有犹太人在面临全面灭绝时安身立命的领地，不是一个理想国。此外，奥芝克在《巴特美莎档案》中，让巴特美莎通过廉政建立了一个古典传统中的理想国，马拉默德则在《上帝的恩惠》中，让科恩建立一个由理智和智力支配、避免现代社会种种邪恶的秩序井然的理想国度。但两者都以失败告终，毁灭于无限膨胀的欲望里。事实上，奥芝克指出，只有来世才能享受天堂的幸福，只有在那里，欲望与理智平衡，人容易满足，没有诱人作恶的种种邪恶欲望。

然而，贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克最终是要在当下的美国土地上建立理想国的。他们关注着如何根据启蒙时代的政治理想建立有效的民主政治体系，但他们更关注依照古典乌托邦传统，从人本主义角度提高人的素质。对于他们来说，美国资产阶级民主体系是依据启蒙时代的伟大政治理想建立起来的，如果不是因为人的腐败，从理论上说本可以是目前最完善、最有利的政治体系。因此，关键是从人本角度解决问题。不过，他们并不象传统的乌托邦主义那样期望通过制定规范、约束人的行为来达到社会的完美状态。他们心目中的理想国并不是一个固定的终极目标。他们注重通过对人的教化来改善社会状况，使人与社会不断进步，走向完善。比起古典传统的乌托邦主义来说，这种新的乌托邦思想给了人们以更多的自由选择和发展个性的机会。

三位美国犹太作家在探索从人本角度建设理想的生存状态时，由于他们所受的文化影响，犹太文化和美国主流文化的传统和精髓形成了新的乌托邦思想。

一方面，他们从犹太传统中找到力量对抗邪恶和人的欲望的负面影响，相信受难具有教化人救赎人的作用，受难经历能提高人的道德修养和品格，使整个社会不断改善，向理想状态发展。

第一，正如马拉默德在《基辅怨》和《店员》中寄托的寓意，人可以通过受难接受代人受过的思想，或者从受难中奋起行动，对抗邪恶和其他毁灭性的力量。第二，贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克的新乌托邦思想中，突出了集体在个人生活中的重要性：受难经历教导人们懂得投身于集体的意义，在集体中制服欲望，集体的力量最终会抑制邪恶的蔓延，减少痛苦。贝娄通过赫索格的经历指出，人应该由一心追逐独一无二的命运，转而投入到平凡的生活当中。奥芝克在《罗莎》中也强调要投入到集体富有活力的生活中，这才是对抗大屠杀这一人类最大邪恶的真正胜利。同时，贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克都认为，一个有活力、有力量的集体应当有着健康的人与人的关系。马拉默德在《天使列文》和《房客》中表示，健康的人与人的关系，不仅仅包括人与人之间要有爱心，而且不同的种族群体之间也要互相团结，相亲相爱，和平共处。此外，马拉默德在《店员》和《新生活》中指出，投入到集体当中，这也意味着要学会承担责任，过着有道德的生活。第三，贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克探索了关于神的全新概念，表明了人如果能把握有关神的这一内涵并以此作为生活的借鉴和向导，就可对抗邪恶，减少痛苦。在现代，神的概念更多的是一种文化传统，而不是宗教信仰，它更多地意味着人生活中的道德力量，以及规范那些控制人与人之间关系的社会力量。从贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克的小说中，可以总结出关于神的新概念的五大方面。其一，它意味着救赎，这是指人应该努力使人的自然冲动力量和欲望协调适度，以实现完整的人格；它同时也意味着要努力消灭不公正现象和纷争，以实现良好的社会秩序，使大家互相合作，有机会最大限度地表达自我。其二，它意味着人应当对自己的自由选择承担责任，并承担对民族、对国家的责任。其三，它意味着要有爱心、仁慈、同情与正义。其四，神是一种力量，不是超自然的生命，这种力量中含有一种辩证关系，近似于道教的福祸相依和儒家的中和思想，即无论做什么，走极端有可能促使事物走向它的反面。奥芝克的小说尤其体现了这一思想：情感与欲望是人生而有之的，压抑人的情感或欲望不会实现快乐而满意的人生；但如果让情感和欲望无限膨胀，就会变成偶像崇拜——崇拜感官物质享受、名利和权力，给人带来灾难。只有领会并贯彻这一辩证思想，才有可能实现欲望与理智的平衡。其五是将神与灵魂联系起来，即人应更多地关注灵魂而非肉体，加强灵魂与神的联系，以寻求有意义的人生。

另一方面，新的理想国是建立在美国主流文化中美国梦的精髓上。美国梦是指诞生于美国领土、移民的国度的观念和理想，包含了自由、平等、保护人的生存权、财产和追求幸福的权利，也意味着通过个人努力和奋斗获得成功，物质成功或得到别人的认可。贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克认为可以通过以下两方面更好地实现移民心目中的美国梦，即真正实现自由、平等、保护人的生存权和追求幸福的权利和实现幸福的人生。

首先，他们相信促使社会改善和提高的关键在于开明、智慧的政府，因此重要的是要选择能够指导人民并为人民服务的领导明智。他们也相信法律体系能够有效地阻止当权人滥用职权，保护人权，只是为一些金钱至上的律师所败坏。如果政府或当权者令人不满，民主精神提出，人们可以不服从或起来反抗。但由于这三位作家更愿意通过改良使社会逐步完善起来，因此他们更推崇培养领导者以德治国的品质。这一点仍然体现了这三位作家从人本主义的角度出发、从培养人

的德行和素质出发建设理想国的理想。马拉默德在《新生活》中就全面地表达了这些思想。此外，自由、平等和追求幸福的权利如果没有扩展到少数民族和妇女，那么只是空谈。然而，性别歧视就反映在许多伟大的男性作家作品中对妇女形象的刻板形象化、扭曲和忽视上，包括贝娄和马拉默德。奥芝克为文学世界提供了有血有肉的、活生生的妇女形象，揭示了理想国中女性所应当拥有的权利和地位。

其次，贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克揭示，虽然通过个人奋斗获得成功的思想使人和社会有活力和发展，但却在美国社会走了极端，促使人们沉湎于物质成功，醉心于追名逐利，导致了邪恶和痛苦。他们提出以艺术培养人的想象力，激活人的思想，使人们更多地关注精神生活而不是物质生活，使人的灵魂恢复活力，以此对抗美国成功思想的负面因素。

犹太文化与美国梦的精神并行不悖。贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克吸取的是犹太传统中的精髓，具有普遍价值的部分。犹太传统中的人文主义源于西方启蒙传统，而美国民主准则和价值也是源于西方人文主义传统，两者是相统一的。

乌托邦思想总有不现实的地方，这三位美国犹太作家的新理想国也不例外。首先在他们对待民主体制的态度上，他们一方面清醒地认识到，在现代状况下所谓民主典范的虚幻性，另一方面，因其所受的资产阶级教育，他们又相信如果不是当权者的腐败，正义、平等、自由是可以真正实现的。其次，他们不愿意对社会、政府、机构和体制作出变动，而是相信教育和培养人的道德品质，但这是相当漫长的过程，改良主义思想在面临压迫、不平等和暴行面前是软弱无力的。此外，应当注意到，无论在男作家还是女作家的理想中，都没有涉及到关于有建设性的男性与女性的关系结构问题。

尽管新的理想国存在缺陷，在后现代氛围中的美国却具有相当重要的意义。后现代主义为我们理解世界提供了有益的视角，但如果全盘接受它却是毁灭性的，因为后现代主义怀疑普遍价值和“宏大叙述”。三位美国犹太作家承认现实与普遍价值间存在距离，现实可以背离普遍价值和理想，但这并不意味着它们不存在。他们相信人通过努力可以接近普遍价值的实现。新理想国的意义就在于它希望并相信社会在不断进步和完善；尽管没有一个最终的完美状态，但它是一种乐观的观念、积极的奋斗和追求。

对贝娄、马拉默德和奥芝克小说的研究显示，不同的文化都有其珍贵的遗产，但不同的文化又有一些价值观是共同的。在这三位美国犹太作家的小说中表达出的对理想国的追寻，不仅体现了美国犹太读者而且体现了其他读者的心声。虽然路漫漫兮其修远，但这种追寻的精神却与广大读者产生了共鸣，发人深思，催人奋发。

## 关键词：

美国犹太文学，同化，受难，追寻，理想国，犹太文化，美国梦

## INTRODUCITON

Problems are often raised when it comes to labeling writers, which is least favored by writers themselves. The label of Jewish-American writer/literature is a case in point. In speaking of Jewish-American writers, the term is always used to refer to those American writers who come from Jewish families, show the influence of Jewish culture on them in their novels, and always have Jews as their protagonists, who, however, are not necessarily much aware of their Jewish identity.

To be sure, for literary critics, such a label does not necessarily reduce the stature of or disregard the universal values in the writers and their works concerned. To categorize or to schematize simply points to the characteristics that some writers share and helps people better understand them by connecting the writers concerned and their works with their common social or family backgrounds. As H.A. Taine proves in *Philosophy of Art*, an artistic creation is not isolated, and in order to determine the formation of and to understand a piece of art, an artist or a group of artists, it is beneficial to put it among all of the author's works, to connect the author and all his works with the group of artists and their works that appear in the same place at the same time and to which he belongs, and to associate the group and their works with their milieu.

Writers, however, tend to reject such labeling as parochializing and limiting. Saul Bellow always displays his doubts to it and declares solemnly that "I have just written as Saul Bellow. I have never attempted to make myself Jewish. I've never tried to appeal to a community. I never thought of writing for Jews exclusively...I think of myself as a person of Jewish origin - American and Jewish - who has had a certain experience of life which is part Jewish" (Miller 43). Bernard Malamud believes that the term of Jewish-American writer is "schematic and reductive. If the scholar needs the term, he can have it, but it won't be doing him any good if he limits his interpretation of a writer to fit a label he applies" (Field 12). Cynthia Ozick is also opposed to being called a Jewish American writer, because "Jewish writers, whatever language they write in, and whether they are in Israel or the various Diasporas, must be writers first, and then Jews; otherwise it may turn out that there is prose on Jewish themes. . .But by and large, if you lead with Jewish themes, your fiction will falter and stutter into polemic, politics, tendentiousness" (Klingenstein 49). Malamud's statement that "all men are Jews except they don't know it" may point to some understanding to these writers' concerns, which surpass ethnicity to reach into the heart of every man and woman. If a student of literature can avoid limiting the interpretation of writers to fit a label and go beyond their particular ethnicity, a cautious attitude to the "Jewish-American writers" can be attained and the underlying values of their works can be discovered.

The achievements of Jewish-American writers in modern American literature cannot be brushed aside easily. Jewish literature appeared on the American land as

early as the 1880s when large numbers of Jewish immigrants stepped on the American land. At first it appeared in the form of Yiddish literature, which did not prosper and mature until after World War I and declined in the 1940s. The importance of Jewish-American literature rose with the Jewish writers who wrote in English around the two world wars. Such figures as Mary Antin, Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska, Isaac Rosenfeld, Meyer Levin, Michael Gold, Samuel Ornitz and Henry Roth appeared and began to attract social attention. But they did not enter the mainstream American literature, and received only limited critical attention except within the realm of American Jewish writing. It was in the 1950s when Jewish-American literature came to prosperity and was widely acclaimed. Jewish-American writers became widely read, won recognition and carried off important national literary prizes, among whom are Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Chaim Potok, Ronald Sukenick, and there are even two Nobel Prize winners for literature, Saul Bellow and I. B. Singer. People are simply amazed at what the American writers coming from this ethnic group can achieve. What's more important, these writers of Jewish ethnicity write on the American land for all of humanity in modern life. They write of the everyday man and woman. Practically, they depict people's suffering, marginality, victimization, alienation, redemption, and messianism under modern conditions. This comes back to what one should bear in mind before one jumps to use the much debated term of "Jewish-American writers": the Jewishness in their works "was not to be viewed as a special world of experience, but as a quality that informs all of modern life. 'The Jew expresses the experience of modernity itself' ..". Or as Saul Bellow argued, "...Jewish pain has fundamentally the same meaning as does pain for everyone. 'Jewish suffering does not drive us from human nature'" (Miller 40-41).

The group of Jewish-American writers who wrote between the 1950s and the 1980s have different things on their mind and in their works from those who published around the two world wars, although there were of course still similarities between them.

Those who published around the two world wars were much influenced by their experiences as Jewish immigrants in the American land so that their works reflect the immigrant experiences and state of mind on a new land. Some of these people came to the United States as immigrants such as Mary Antin, Abraham Cahan, and Anzia Yezierska; others were American-born of parents who were immigrants, such as Henry Roth. Despite this difference, most of them were linked to a past in the "old country", mostly in Eastern Europe, had experienced poverty, the struggle of life and anti-Semitism in the metropolitan ghetto in "the new world" of America. They had witnessed and undergone the painful process of assimilation into the dominant American culture, which caused family tensions and religious and moral ambiguity. The attraction of the Gentile world, the loss and nostalgia of an old culture, the tension between Jewish Orthodoxy and the American WASP culture, the reflection on the forming of a new self and on the gains and losses of a change of identity, and the status of cultural marginality are reflected in their works and characterize the concerns of the Jewish-American fiction of this period.

These typical themes can be found in the works of some important Jewish-American writers of this period. Mary Antin expresses frankly in her autobiography *The Promised Land* (1912) her doubt of the religious dicta and her happiness in the bliss and wonders offered by the American world. In *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Abraham Cahan depicts through David Levinsky not only the strong urge of the early Jewish immigrants to rise from poverty, to shake off the elements alien to the American dominant culture, and to achieve material success, but also the pain of a marginal man who cannot find his anchorage after he has emerged from the world of rigid Judaic orthodoxy, and who is torn between assimilation and nostalgia, success and regret. In *Hungry Hearts* (1920), by Anzia Yezierska, and in *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl: An Autobiography* (1923) by Samuel Ornitz, the two writers touch on the attraction of the Gentile culture for the Jews, the Jews' aspiration for the outside world, cultural and generational conflicts, and warning of identity crisis resulting from Americanization. Michael Gold in his *Jews without Money* (1930) depicts the poverty of the Jews in the United States, which is a blaring gap between the expectations of the immigrant Jews and the reality in the United States. The theme of father and son conflicts, typical of family tension and in a certain way symbolizing the conflict between the gentile and Jewish cultures, is also reflected in *Call It Sleep* (1934) by Henry Roth and in *Passage from Home* (1964) by Isaac Rosenfeld.

The Jewish-American writers who published mainly from the end of the 1950s to the 1980s have experiences and state of mind that are different from those of their predecessors. A closer look at their experiences is necessary before we talk about the characteristics of their works. Although some of them were born of immigrant parents or immigrant grandparents, they are quite Americanized. They have parents or grandparents who experienced the painful assimilation process. Unlike their predecessors who went to the Jewish Sunday schools after they came back from secular American schools, they spend much more time on secular education in their childhood and go to American universities. They are well immersed and brought up in the dominant American culture. They belong to or are the descendants of the mainstream American Jews, who have risen from the low social level or who have become well established in a land that is relatively tolerant of the Jews. Quite naturally, they regard themselves as first of all Americans, and then Jewish. They are concerned with the fate of the country and the welfare of the general people rather than those of the Jewish community. They are critical of the American society as its members rather than as outsiders. Nevertheless, they come from Jewish backgrounds and have some Jewish education, which have much influence on them so that they are not completely cut off from Jewish culture. They themselves also experience or witness the assimilation process. And then, wherever they go, even in such a comparatively tolerant country as the United States, they encounter anti-Semitism, whether intense or slight, which reminds them of their Jewish identity despite their Americanization. In addition, as natural members of a nation who has a long history of exodus and persecution, and whose spirit as a group has bound its members together to tide over every imaginable difficulty, they will forever be concerned with their own culture and the fate of their people, because the blood tie cannot be easily

severed, and the affinity with their national culture will always be in them. Having shaken off the negative influences of the Jewish tradition because they don't have to be limited by it as the previous generations, they are left to find that Hebraic tradition, with its universalism, appeals to them. The essence of this culture, with its values, dreams, hopes and optimism for mankind, exists in them so that Jewishness will always be “a gift, a piece of good fortune, with which one doesn't quarrel” (Cronin 57).

The concerns of the Jewish-American writers around the two world wars also find their way to the works of this latter group. There is no disruption of such themes as assimilation and identity crisis, family tensions and nostalgia, since the experiences of Jews as Semites in a gentile world are not foreign to some of these writers.

However, because of Americanization and their experiences as American citizens, they have some other more important concerns. Still cherishing the old dreams of their immigrant parents and grandparents, with the American dream cultivated in their hearts, they are confronted with a reality so much different from their ideals. They are disappointed with American reality, and suffer from spiritual crisis in the modern society. They are diagnosing the problems of the country to which they now belong and trying to find a way out of the crisis. But where can they find it? They are facing the aftermath and dilemma of assimilation. In the 1950s, the shock of the massacre of the Jews committed by the Nazis led to a surge of going back to the Jewish tradition among the American Jews. This was the beginning of the doubt of Jewish assimilation in the United States for some Jewish-American writers, who go through the processes of rediscovering and preserving the Jewish tradition by their own efforts. For some others, rediscovering it or not, the Jewish tradition is always in them because of the family influence in their childhood. Whatever the case is, the ideas of this group are molded both by the American ideas and by the Jewish influence so that the way lies in a combination of the essence from both cultures, since they can discard neither.

In this group of writers, Saul Bellow (1915-), Bernard Malamud (1914-1986) and Cynthia Ozick (1928-) are among those who are most noteworthy. While other writers of this group are touched lightly in this dissertation, reference will also be made to Philip Roth (1933-), Joseph Heller (1923-), Chaim Potok (1929-), and Ronald Sukenick (1932-).

Bellow, Malamud, and Ozick are selected for my concentrated study for several reasons. First, they still retain their Jewishness so that the influences of both the American culture and the Jewish culture are reflected in their fiction. Bellow, Malamud, and Ozick were all born of Russian-Jewish immigrant parents and experienced the Depression, the Jewish influence, American college education and the process of Americanization in their early ages. After spending his first nine years in a Montreal slum, Bellow came to Chicago in the United States from Canada with his parents, who earlier had emigrated from Russia. He learned Hebrew thoroughly in *cheder* (the Yiddish-Hebrew school that Jewish pupils entered for religious instruction), speaking Yiddish at home and fluently, instructed by his strongly Jewish mother. Malamud, born in New York of Russian-Jewish parents, also lived in poverty



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